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Window into Overseas Koreans



Special Article - Commissioner Lee Sang-duk creates place for harmony in Tokyo with Korean residents in Japan
Policy in Focus - 'Overseas Koreans can get all kinds of certificates conveniently issued at Incheon Airport'
Overseas Koreans can now verify their identities without using domestic phones or visiting embassies
Current Issues & Topics - 2024 Dialogue with Government, Academia, Civic Groups on Domestic Compatriot Policy
Special Feature - 2024 Overseas Koreans Top 10 News



Urgent need to expand career and employment education for ‘returning’ Koryo youth

‘Specialized training for mainstream high school,’ National Tomorrow Learning Card should also be made available to Koryo-saram high school students

The 2024 Specialized Course on Broadcasting Media for Multicultural Youth Graduation Ceremony, held at Korea Polytechnic University (Incheon campus), on Nov. 29 was special. Of the 19 graduates, 17 were Koryo youth. This is because Korea Polytechnic University allowed F-4 (Overseas Koreans) as foreign nationals in the applicant qualifications for the first time.

Koryo-saram Global Network (KGN, President Chae Ye-jin) worked closely with Incheon Polytechnic University for the recruitment of students for the selection process. Thanks to this, the university was able to recruit students easily, and Koryo youth successfully completed “nationally funded” vocational training. Everyone in attendance applauded the “Korean language graduation speech” of a young Koryo student, whose Korean had been very poor before the student took Korean language classes, alongside the course.

KGN presented the book “Koryo People Stories Together” (Истории корё сарам живущих среди нас), published by the Asia Development Foundation in Korean and Russian, to 17 Koryo youth graduates on Oct. 26. This is because the proud history of Koryo migration (Part 1), examples of consultations with Koryo compatriots about life in Korea (Part 2) and daily Korean language skills (Part 3) were all created with content necessary for Koryo youth living in Korea.

Ninety Koryo students attending Onyang Yonghwa High School in Asan, South Chungcheong Province, also received the book “Koryo People Stories Together” as a gift. Choi Eun-hyeok, a Korean language teacher at Onyang Yonghwa High School, consulted with Koryo students and found that they were very interested in the specialized training for mainstream high schools (National Tomorrow Learning Card) supported by the Korea Employment Information Service. Choi found out that students could apply at the end of the second year and learn skills at a confectionery and baking school for 10 months, from March to December, of the third year, and then get a job. However, Koryo students, who are classified as “foreigners” with an F-4 visa for overseas Koreans, were prevented from even applying for the National Tomorrow Learning Card.

The Asia Development Foundation (ADF) (Chairman Kim Jun-il), which recognized the urgency of career and employment education for Koryo youth who immigrated midway through their education,



Lim Young-sang, professor emeritus of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, advisory committee member of the Asia Development Foundation

signed an agreement with the Korea Hotel and Tourism Vocational School (Hanhojeon) in Ansan and will begin an eight-week confectionery and bakery education and training program for Koryo youth between January and February 2025. As soon as the announcement was made, 22 people applied in just one day, exceeding the 20 spots available. Although it is shorter than the six-month specialized course at Incheon Polytechnic University, Hanhojeon’s eight-week confectionery and bakery education program is also expected to have good results.

“Career and employment education for Koryo students is necessary starting from middle school. We need to promote specialized high schools that operate Korean language classes and dormitories.”

This is the unanimous opinion of activists who have counseled Koryo youth in Koryo villages across the country. However, many Koryo students, who already have difficulty adjusting to school itself, are attending humanities high schools. Korean society is severely lacking in personnel in specialized technical fields, which are called “foundation industries” in the country. Parents who work late into the night do not have the capacity to guide their children. If we cannot guide them properly, won’t it inevitably become a great burden to Korean society in the future?

We need to better promote specialized high schools known to Koryo students. In addition, the Ministry of Employment and Labor should allow foreign national youth of Korean descent to use the National Tomorrow Learning Card so that they can get jobs through specialized training at general high schools, including alternative schools with academic credit recognition, just as Korea Polytechnic University provided education and training opportunities to foreign nationals of Korean descent. Only when “returning” Koryo youth can put down their roots in this land can we all be happy. [장]



02 Opening the Window	Urgent need to expand career and employment education for 'returning' Koryo youth Lim Young-sang, professor emeritus of Hankyong University of Foreign Studies, advisory committee member of the Asia Development Foundation
04 Special Article	Commissioner Lee Sang-duk creates place for harmony in Tokyo with Korean residents in Japan
06 Policy in Focus	'Overseas Koreans can get all kinds of certificates conveniently issued at Incheon Airport' Overseas Koreans can now verify their identities without using domestic phones or visiting embassies
10 Current Issues & Topics	2024 Dialogue with Government, Academia, Civic Groups on Domestic Compatriot Policy 'Overseas compatriots dual citizenship age should be lowered from 65 to 40 to help national interest' Establishing systematic Korean language education system and need for strengthened communication with media 'Need to create customized support system through understanding different residence conditions of compatriots residing in Korea'
14 Special Feature	2024 Overseas Koreans Top 10 News Running fast to realize national task of 'building global Korean community'
18 Special Seat	Wearing clothes decorated with Hangeul, a Korean to the core; 'Hangeul is like the rice we eat every day'
20 Interview	Korean descendants in Cuba: 'Thank you to OKA for inviting us to our homeland'
23 Into the News	Overseas Korean Literary Awards ceremony: 'Writing in Korean abroad has great meaning'
24 OKA News	OKA policy advisory committee says, 'We need to bring together compatriot affairs that are scattered throughout government' (3 other pieces included)
26 OKA Announcements	Contest for experiences of young Koreans who have interned at overseas Korean companies

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Address: 34-36th Floor, Booyoung Songdo Tower, 241, Incheon Tower-daero, Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, Korea (22009)
Tel: +82-32-585-3100, www.oka.go.kr
Instagram: @overseas_koreans_agency
Facebook: facebook.com/oka202365
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This magazine can also be viewed at <http://webzine.korean.net>

Commissioner Lee Sang-duk creates place for harmony in Tokyo with Korean residents in Japan

Attended meeting of Korean residents hosted by Mindan and explained OKA's main policy directions



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk gives a speech at a meeting of Korean residents in Japan in Tokyo on Nov. 29.

Lee Sang-duk, commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, visited Tokyo on Nov. 29 and 30 to hold a meeting with Korean residents in Japan, listen to their voices and communicate with the community by touring their worksites.

On Nov. 29, the commissioner attended a meeting with Korean residents in Japan hosted by the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan), where he introduced the OKA's major policies and projects to about 120 Korean residents in Japan and exchanged opinions on important pending issues, such as Mindan's project plans for the 60th anniversary of Korea-Japan diplomatic relations.

Lee expressed his intention to actively communicate with overseas Koreans by establishing the overseas Korean communication platform Overseas Korean TV, which would provide real-time content related to Hangeul education and news about overseas Koreans,

among other areas.

"We will promote policies that will enhance the capabilities of the entire Korean people through the unification of the overseas Korean community and enable the Republic of Korea and the overseas Korean community to grow together," he said.

Establishment of Overseas Korean TV, pushing ahead with selection and announcement of Overseas Korean of the Month

In particular, Lee announced the OKA will expand support projects for the domestic settlement of compatriots by establishing a system for the stable settlement of compatriots flowing into Korea as a way to respond to the crisis of a declining population.

The OKA plans to newly promote the Overseas Korean of the Month as one of its key projects for 2025, which will publicize cases of contributions by compatriots to their home country through SNS.

"Every month, we will select overseas compatriots who have contributed greatly to the Republic of Korea during difficult times with patriotism for their home country and promote them domestically to shed new light on the

OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (L, front row) tours the Shin-Okubo area, the largest Koreatown in Japan, on Nov. 30.



importance of our compatriots abroad,” he said.

Lee added that he hopes the Korean community in Japan, including Mindan, will provide strength so that Korea-Japan relations can take a further leap forward next year, which will mark the 60th anniversary of Korea-Japan diplomatic relations.

Listening to opinions from compatriot groups regarding 60th anniversary of Korea-Japan diplomatic relations

Mindan responded that it will communicate with Korean associations and other organizations to carry out various commemorative projects and use the 60th anniversary of Korea-Japan diplomatic relations as an opportunity for harmonizing the Korean community in Japan.

Meanwhile, Mindan also conducted an overseas voter registration campaign to encourage compatriots to actively participate in elections.

Mindan explained the overseas voting registration system to the compatriots who attended the meeting and set up an offline application booth to conduct on-site registration applications.

Kim Yi-jung, head of the Central Headquarters of Mindan, actively encouraged participation in overseas voting, saying, “Participation in elections is a different way to contribute to the development of the country.”

Improvement of relevant systems to promote overseas voting participation

OKA Commissioner Lee also emphasized participation in elections through overseas voting registration and expressed his intent to improve relevant systems in order to promote convenience for overseas Koreans participating in elections.

The following day, on Nov. 30, Lee visited the Shin-Okubo (新大久保) area in Tokyo, an area with a high population of Koreans, to grasp the current status of compatriot small business owners and listen to the opinions of new groups,

such as the Korean Association.

In particular, through a meeting with officials of the Federation of Korean Associations in Tokyo, he listened to current issues and difficulties and discussed the direction of development of the Korean community in Japan.

Unlike Ikuno Koreatown in Osaka, which is centered on old-timers, Shin-Okubo is centered on newcomers and is the largest Koreatown in eastern Japan. From the 1980s, Korean restaurants began to open one by one in Shin-Okubo, where Koreans began to live after World War II. It took on its current appearance thanks to the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup and the popularity of the drama “Winter Sonata.” The sacrifice of the late Lee Suhyeon, who died while trying to save a drunk passenger who fell onto the tracks at Shin-Okubo Station in 2001, also changed the way Japanese people viewed Koreans.

Meanwhile, this is the second time that Commissioner Lee has visited Japan since assuming office on July 31, after his attendance at the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Victims Memorial Ceremony on Aug. 5.

“I will spare no effort and support so that not only the Korean victims of the atomic bomb but also our compatriots remaining in Japan can heal the pain of the past and their descendants can move forward toward a bright future,” Lee said. “I find it meaningful that my first stop since assuming office is Hiroshima, and I will continue to work to promote the rights and interests of our compatriots and take a continued interest in the overseas Korean community.” 🇰🇷

‘Overseas Koreans can get all kinds of certificates conveniently issued at Incheon Airport’

OKA opens Integrated Civil Service Office Branch to communicate with overseas Koreans

The path has been opened for overseas Koreans entering and leaving the country to easily obtain various certificates at the airport. On Dec. 2, the Overseas Koreans Agency moved the Integrated Civil Service Office Incheon Branch to the Government Complex Center on the second floor of Incheon International Airport Terminal 2 and held an opening ceremony to begin full-scale operations.

The Civil Service Office, which began operations the same morning, provides various civil affairs services related to overseas immigration, such as issuing copies of overseas national registration certificates, reissuing overseas emigration report confirmations and reporting of returns, as well as integrated civil affairs consultations (by phone and video), reservations and guidance. In addition, consultation services are provided on various administrative civil affairs closely related to overseas Koreans, such as legal affairs (nationality, compatriot visas, immigration), military service, family relations, national taxes, customs, veterans affairs, employment, national pension, health insurance and driver’s licenses.

‘One-stop effect’ achieved with presence of civil service offices of each government department

In particular, the government-integrated center on the second floor of Incheon International Airport Terminal 2, where the new Incheon branch office is located, is expected to have a synergy effect in helping overseas Koreans handle various civil service tasks because, as the name suggests, the civil service integrated offices of each government department are gathered together.

At the Ministry of Justice Immigration Service Center, one can easily handle tasks, such as issuing various certificates and registering for automatic immigration screening. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Passport Civil Service Center provides 24/7 emergency passport issuance, passport issuance record certificates, and passport acquisition and loss reporting.



A poster showing the location of the Incheon branch of the OKA’s Integrated Civil Service Office, located on the second floor of the Government Complex Center at Incheon International Airport Terminal 2.

In addition, the Military Manpower Administration provides services, such as overseas travel permits for military service personnel, confirmation and management of military service records for those entering and leaving the country, and enlistment applications for permanent residents.

In addition, the Animal and Plant Quarantine Center of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; the Marine Products Quarantine Center of the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries; the Traveler Customs Clearance civil affairs office of the Korea Customs Service; the National Heritage Administration’s Cultural Heritage Appraisal Office; the Airport Police Unit Security Center; and the National Tax Service’s Taxpayer Support Center are located here.

The OKA has set up an integrated civil service office in Gwanghwamun, Seoul, and had operated a branch office in Songdo, Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, where the OKA’s headquarters is located. However, due to the inconvenience of having to travel to Songdo to use the branch office, the usage rate was low, and the need to move to the airport was raised. The OKA explained that any business that cannot be handled at the Incheon branch office will be handled in conjunction with the Gwanghwamun office.

‘We will increase the number of civil service office branches in the future’

The opening ceremony, held in the afternoon of the same day, was attended by OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, director of the Consular Security Bureau



Key attendees take a commemorative photo at the unveiling ceremony at the Incheon branch of the OKA Integrated Civil Service Office, located on the second floor of the Government Complex Center at Incheon International Airport Terminal 2, on Dec. 2. From left to right are Incheon International Airport Corp. Vice President Kim Beom-ho, head of the Overseas Koreans Cooperation Center Kim Young-geun, director of the Consular Security Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yoon Ju-seok, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, OKA policy advisory committee member Shin Yeon-jeong, head of the Overseas Koreans Service Support Center Kim Yeon-sik and World Federation of Korean Associations Executive Vice President Lee Byeong-mun.

of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yoon Ju-seok, Vice President of Incheon International Airport Corp. Kim Beom-ho, head of the Overseas Koreans Cooperation Center Kim Young-geun, head of the Overseas Koreans Service Support Center Kim Yeon-sik and OKA policy advisory committee member Shin Yeon-jeong.

“The civil service office will serve as a communication channel that allows overseas Koreans to feel closer to their home country,” OKA Commissioner Lee said. “We will work to increase the number of civil service offices in the future while looking at the usage rate and improving convenience.

“The OKA will be there for overseas Koreans around the world from the moment they first meet their mother country. Although it is starting in a small space, it has great significance, and since the civil service offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and each government department are gathered here, it will have a one-stop effect in handling administrative affairs.”

Evaluation of policies that provide practical help

The OKA is being evaluated as a case that has put into practice the promise that it has made so far: “As a protective barrier and representative for 7 million overseas Koreans, we will lower the threshold, communicate, solve the thorny issues of overseas Koreans, provide practical help, and take care of the people’s livelihoods and lived realities.”

“Since its launch in June of last year, the OKA has done a lot for overseas Koreans,” Consular Security Bureau director Yoon said in his congratulatory speech. “Since Commissioner Lee took office, the speed of the OKA’s business progress has been more rapid and has gained momentum, and the opening ceremony of the Incheon branch is a result of that.”

OKA policy advisory committee member Shin, a New Zealand compatriot who received a certificate herself immediately after the opening ceremony, emphasized, “The OKA’s Civil Affairs Office is not simply an administrative space but a bridge connecting overseas compatriots and the Republic of Korea.”

She expressed her expectations from the perspective of overseas compatriots, saying: “The relocation of the Incheon branch of the OKA Civil Service Office to Incheon Airport will be a strong gesture of understanding and consideration for overseas compatriots. I am grateful that I no longer have to set aside time to get an apostille when visiting my home country.” 🇯🇵

Overseas Koreans can now verify their identities without using domestic phones or visiting embassies

OKA, Korea Communications Commission, Ministry of Science and ICT launch pilot service for Overseas Korean Authentication Center

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) launched the Overseas Korean Authentication Center service on a pilot basis on Nov. 28 in cooperation with the Korea Communications Commission (KCC), the Ministry of Science and ICT, and the Digital Platform Government Committee to improve accessibility to domestic digital services for citizens residing overseas.

After signing a business agreement with relevant ministries in March, the government established a non-face-to-face identity verification system for overseas citizens (Overseas Koreans Authentication Center) based on electronic passports, developed through interagency working-level consultations and business briefings for private businesses.

In the past, citizens living abroad had to travel distances to an overseas mission to obtain a joint or financial certificate in order to use domestic online services. In addition, even if a certificate was issued, domestic mobile phone verification was required to

actually use the service, which was inconvenient.

However, from now on, if overseas compatriots register as overseas citizens and have a resident registration number and possess a valid electronic passport, they will be able to obtain an overseas citizen certificate through a civil application and verify their identity online. During the pilot service period, certificate issuance will be the priority.

With the launch of the service on this day, certificates can be issued through the Shinhan Bank and Viva Republica (Toss) apps, and starting in December, they can also be issued through Kookmin Bank, Woori Bank and Hana Bank. Moreover, in addition to the five types of certificates that can be issued currently, there are plans to add other certificates that can be used by overseas Koreans.

Overseas Korean Certification Center to officially launch services next year

In addition, in line with the official launch of the Overseas Korean Certification Center next year, plans are being put in place to offer services so that through their certificates, overseas nationals can use various domestic online services, such as e-government services, e-finance services, non-face-to-face medical services, online education services and online shopping.



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (6th from R) and other key participants press the pilot service launch button at the ceremony to commemorate the launch of the pilot service of the Overseas Koreans Certification Center, held at the Diplomatic Town in Seocho-gu, Seoul, on Nov. 28.

재외동포인증센터 시범 서비스 개시 기념행사

2024년 11월 28일(목) 10 ~ 11:35 | 신라호텔 12층 대회의실



The OKA holds a ceremony at the Diplomatic Center in Seocho-gu, Seoul, to commemorate the launch of the pilot service of the Overseas Koreans Certification Center, a non-face-to-face identity verification service that resolves the inconvenience of overseas Koreans having to visit overseas diplomatic missions and own Korean mobile phones, on Nov. 28. The photo shows OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (6th from L, front row) taking a commemorative photo with the participants.

The Overseas Korean Certification Center service is the world's first project to build and operate a non-face-to-face identity verification system for overseas nationals based on electronic passports and overseas residence information, and can be said to be the best and most innovative project for a digital platform government.

The OKA plans to continue to expand various digital civil service services that will allow overseas Koreans to experience practical convenience, including through the Overseas Koreans Certification Center.

The commemorative event was attended by OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, KCC director Jo Seong-eun, policy director of the Ministry of Science and ICT's Information Protection Network Kim Nam-cheol, director of the Service Innovation Bureau of the Digital Platform Government Committee Lee Byeong-yeon, director of the Digital Safety Support Headquarters of the Korea Internet & Security Agency Kim Jeong-hee, Shinhan Bank Vice President Lim Su-han, Woori Bank Vice President Kim Beom-seok, Hana Bank Vice President Lee Seon-yong, director of Kookmin Bank Park Hyeong-ju and Viva Republica Vice President Kim Gyu-ha.

"The overseas Korean community has been curious about what has improved in terms of the rights of overseas Koreans since the launch of the OKA," OKA Commissioner Lee said. "This service is the most tangible service. Anyone who has lived abroad even for a little while will realize the importance of this service, and although it is a pilot service, I ask that you make an effort to spread it widely among the overseas Koreans community."

"Previously, overseas Koreans had to maintain domestic mobile phones for domestic financial transactions while living overseas, which meant they had to pay unnecessary costs, and overseas Koreans living far from embassies had to visit the embassy far away for authentication, which was very difficult. The launch of this Overseas Koreans Authentication Center service is a good

example of incorporating advanced domestic IT into administration, and the OKA will continue to expand digital civil affairs services in the future."

"It is especially meaningful in that it provides a digital platform that allows our compatriots around the world to connect more closely with the Republic of Korea," KCC director Jo Seong-eun said. "The KCC will spare no support to realize a digital society without discrimination for all citizens."

Kim Nam-cheol, director of the Information Protection Network Policy Bureau of the Ministry of Science and ICT, said: "Through the efforts of many organizations and companies the Non-face-to-face Identity Verification Support System for Overseas Citizens has been launched. The Ministry of Science and ICT will continue to do its best to ensure the stable operation and support of the system."

Demonstration event for receiving certificates also held

At the ceremony, a demonstration event for receiving certificates was also held for Koreans from the United States, Canada, France, Indonesia and Singapore.

Mr. B, a Korean American who received a certificate via Zoom from Denver, U.S., said, "It was burdensome to have to go to the LA Embassy 2,000 kilometers away just for a copy of my resident registration, but now that I can receive it online from home, I feel so liberated." 🇺🇸

‘First academic forum for new agenda and paradigm concerning domestic compatriot issues’

OKA Commissioner Lee: ‘Developing customized programs for stable settlement of domestic compatriots’

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) held the 2024 Overseas Korean Policy Academic Forum on the topic of “Dialogue with the Government, Academia, and Civic Groups on the 2024 Domestic Overseas Koreans Policy” at the Luna Miele Convention Hall in the CCMM Building in Yeouido, Seoul, on Dec. 6. The forum was attended by approximately 200 people, including OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, Rep. Yoon Hu-deok of the Democratic Party of Korea, professor Lim Young-sang of the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (former President of the Association for the Studies of Koreans Abroad) and professor Myeong Seung-hwan of Inha University’s Department of Public Administration, as well as officials from academia, the Ministry of Justice and other government ministries, and representatives of overseas Korean organizations.

This forum, held at the one-year mark since the launch of the OKA, was meaningful in that it was the first academic forum for a new agenda and paradigm that focused on compatriots residing in Korea as important policy subjects, rather than just on compatriots residing overseas, which had been the subject of policy until then.

The forum was even more meaningful as it featured suggestions from a variety of experts, including academics, government officials and people in the education sector. In the first session, director Kwak Jae-seok of the Migrant Research and Training Centre gave a presentation on the topic of “Measures to Improve Laws and Systems for Compatriots in Korea.” In addition, senior researcher Kim Jae-ho of the Dasan Economic Research Institute gave a presentation titled “Analysis of the Impact of Lowering the Age of Allowing Dual Citizenship for Overseas Compatriots” and presented the results of a recent study on overseas compatriots that showed that lowering the age of allowing dual citizenship from the current age of 65 to 40 would be the most economically effective.

The second session, titled “Methods for Spreading Domestic Awareness of Overseas Compatriots Living in Korea,” featured panelists Kim Yong-pil, CEO of Dongpo World Newspaper; Lee



Attendees take a commemorative photo at the Overseas Korean Policy Academic Forum held at the Luna Miele Convention Hall in the CCMM Building in Yeouido, Seoul, on Dec. 6.

Young-geun, director of the Overseas Koreans Cooperation Center; Song Seok-won, a professor at Kyunghee University; and Jeong Young-soon, president of the Association of Koryo Saram.

The third session, titled “Policy Dialogue for Settlement of Overseas Compatriots in Korea,” was moderated by Professor Emeritus Lim Young-sang of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (former president of the Association for the Studies of Koreans Abroad), and a lively discussion was held with experts from various fields and heads of overseas Korean organizations in attendance.

In his welcoming speech, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said: “Since the launch of the OKA, the government’s overseas compatriot policy has targeted only compatriots living overseas, but now domestic compatriots are also being considered. It is time to implement effective policies for those who have been excluded from overseas compatriot policies due to their domestic residence. Today’s event is the first step in such efforts. The OKA has reflected in next year’s budget for the first time the development of customized programs for the stable settlement of compatriots residing in Korea and the necessary support for each region. Starting next year, we plan to carry out domestic compatriot settlement support projects in collaboration with local governments and private sector organizations.” [\[창\]](#)

‘Overseas compatriots dual citizenship age should be lowered from 65 to 40 to help national interest’

‘Overseas compatriots visa system, currently divided into Visiting Employment (H-2) and Overseas Compatriots (F-4), should be integrated’

In the first session, director Kwak Jae-seok of the Migrant Research and Training Centre, and Kim Jae-ho, senior researcher at the Dasan Economic Research Institute, gave keynote speeches. Panelists included Lee Jae-hyung, director of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Residence Management Division; Kang Sung-jin, director of the MoJ Nationality Division; Kang Jeong-hyang, director of the Korea Employment and Welfare Pension Research Institute’s Foreigner Policy Research Center; Lee Gyeong-ju, professor at Inha University Law School; and Lee Yang-bok, special professor at Korea University Law School.

In his presentation titled “Measures to Improve Laws and Systems for Compatriots in Korea,” Kwak Jae-seok, director of the Migrant Research and Training Centre, pointed out that “Compatriots residing in Korea are staying with unstable foreign worker status under the employment permit system in the 3D industries that domestic Koreans shun, but due to the lack of social integration and employment support services for these Koreans, problems, such as illegal employment and difficulties in adapting to domestic life, are occurring.”

Accordingly, Kwak suggested: “In preparation for the era of 3 million foreign residents, we must recognize the limitations of the existing policy of using overseas Koreans as a non-professional workforce supply pool as the immigration/migration policy promotion measure. We must unify the currently dual overseas Korean visa system (H2, F4) to allow for the expansion of non-professional employment.

“If this happens, the number of overseas compatriots residing in Korea could increase by about 500,000 compared to the current number,” he said, expressing his hope that, “An active overseas Korean policy will become an important growth engine for the development of the Republic of Korea as a nation facing a low birth rate and an aging population.”

Kim, senior researcher at the Dasan Economic Research Institute, garnered attention by announcing in a presentation titled “Analysis of the Impact of Lowering the Age of Allowing Multiple Citizenship for Overseas Koreans” that lowering the age of allowing



During the first session of the 2024 Dialogue with the Government, Academia, and Civic Groups on Domestic Compatriot Policy, director Kwak Jae-seok of the Migrant Research and Training Centre delivers a thematic presentation.

multiple citizenship for overseas Koreans from the current 65 to 40 would have the greatest effect on increasing the industrial workforce.

Looking at the distribution of the 872,380 overseas compatriots currently residing in Korea by their residence qualifications, the number of overseas Koreans with F-4 visas who can stay long term is 556,700, or 63 percent. In addition, the number of visitors with H-2 visas who can work short term is 96,790, or 11 percent.

“In Korea, which is facing the crisis of a low birth rate and aging society, the issue of human resource development is becoming increasingly important, and the issue of stable settlement of overseas Koreans residing in Korea and actively recognizing and utilizing them as human resources will become even more important in future immigration policy,” Kwak said.

For the research, Kim conducted a survey of overseas Koreans and experts on overseas Koreans. Based on the results of the survey, he predicted that “If the age is lowered to 40, the economically active population will increase and the socioeconomic contribution will be significantly higher, based on the results of comparing the benefits and costs from a social perspective, such as the production effect, added value effect, employment-inducing effect, contribution to social insurance and tax, welfare benefits and health insurance benefits due to the domestic residence of multiple citizenship holders.” [\[Chart\]](#)

Establishing systematic Korean language education system and need for strengthened communication with media

Continued efforts needed to improve image of areas with high concentrations of compatriot residency, as well as improvements to laws, systems, policies

The second session was titled “Measures to Spread Domestic Awareness of Overseas Compatriots in Korea,” with a presentation delivered by Kim Yong-pil, CEO of the Dongpo World Newspaper. Panelists included Lee Young-geun, director of the Overseas Koreans Cooperation Center; Song Seok-won, professor at Kyunghee University; and Jeong Yeong-sun, president of the Association of Koryo Saram.

“We must recognize the importance of domestic policies for Koreans,” CEO Kim Yong-pil said in his presentation. “Although the proportion of Koreans among foreigners residing in Korea is high at 33 percent, there are many Koreans who ‘come to their home country and worry about their identity.’” He also stated that the external influence of overseas Koreans is increasing and that they are also playing a role as transmitters of the image of the Republic of Korea to the world.

Kim emphasized that “Compatriots residing in Korea are playing a leading role in the population inflow and local economic revitalization in an era of local extinction due to population decline.” He pointed out that areas where Chinese Koreans live in groups are generally places where the local economy is stagnant, and expressed regret that while these compatriots live in groups and form commercial districts and play a significant role in revitalizing the local economy, they are not properly recognized.


Nevertheless, Kim pointed out: “Negative perceptions of Chinese compatriots in Korea are widespread. It is important to find solutions and analyze the causes of their creation.” Kim analyzed that as the Chinese compatriot population residing in Korea increases, they should be forming their own communities and assimilating with Koreans, but as Koreans emigrate, a segmentation phenomenon is occurring. He also determined that a combination of a lack of understanding of the identity of the Joseon-jok (ethnic Koreans from China) and “anti-Chinese sentiment” has influenced the negative perception of Chinese compatriots. In addition, he reported that as Chinatowns are formed in Chinese compatriots’ neighborhoods, movies and other mass media are contributing to emerging concerns about “hotbeds



Lee Young-geun (C), director of the Overseas Koreans Cooperation Center, who participated as a panelist in the second session, proposes a plan to spread awareness among overseas compatriots living in Korea.

of crime.”

In addition, as the number of compatriots who receive health insurance, purchase real estate, receive national pensions and receive unemployment benefits increases, there is a controversy over whether they are receiving special treatment, and public opinion on “reverse discrimination” is being formed. He also lamented that there is also a negative perception that excessive “suffrage” is being given to people from particular countries to encourage them to support certain political parties, and in the case of compatriots from China, they are becoming political scapegoats. He also pointed out that the media is directly spreading negative perceptions through movies, mass media and the internet, which is influencing public opinion.

He emphasized the importance of the role of the media in terms of halting the reproduction of negative images and preventing their spread through mass media. He also said we should consider how to spread positive public perceptions of our compatriots in the country. 

‘Need to create customized support system through understanding different residence conditions of compatriots residing in Korea’

KIN President Choi Sang-gu: ‘We urgently need to eliminate inequality and restore community for overseas Koreans’

Professor Emeritus Lim Young-sang of the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies served as the moderator of the third session. Song Geum-ju, director of the Diaspora Heritage Division of Incheon Metropolitan City, presented on “The Overseas Korean Welcome Center: A Space of Communication and Exchange for Overseas Koreans”; Joo Sang-hyun, director of the Foreign Resident Division of Gwangju Metropolitan City, on “The Stable Settlement and Social Participation of Koryo Saram”; Choi Sang-gu, president of the Korean International Network (KIN), on “Policy Dialogue for Settlement of Overseas Compatriots in Korea”; and Lim Mi-eun, a teacher at Ansan Seonil Middle School, on the “Current Status of Immigrant Students of Russian Backgrounds and Policy Support Measures.”

Choi Sang-gu drew attention by suggesting that support should also be provided to stateless compatriots. It was argued that stateless compatriots should also include Japanese Korean compatriots as a result of colonial rule, Sakhalin compatriots, compatriots in Russia and the CIS region formed during the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, compatriots adopted overseas who were unable to acquire the citizenship of their countries of residence and children of North Korean defectors born in China (who are not subject to the North Korean Defectors Act).

Stateless compatriots are in an unstable state in their countries of residence, and they should be guaranteed a return to and legal status in their home country. However, they are not subject to the Overseas Koreans Act, so their immigration and legal status are not guaranteed.

Among overseas nationals (with permanent residency status), compatriots who were born overseas but do not have resident registration are Korean citizens but are treated as foreigners when staying in the country. However, their obligations as citizens are applied in the same way as domestic citizens. In addition, it was




Lim Mi-eun (R), a teacher at Ansan Seonil Middle School, presents the “Current Status of Immigrant Students of Russian Backgrounds and Policy Support Measures” in the third session.

pointed out that they are treated unfairly when it comes to health insurance subscription and insurance premium calculation, exclusion from basic livelihood security eligibility, inability to apply for national rental housing, inability to use certain loans and different interest rates when borrowing from banks.

In addition, their child support funds have currently been ruled as unconstitutional by a court, and only compatriots who report they have permanently returned to Korea and have renounced their permanent residency status in other countries can receive the same treatment as Korean nationals. Therefore, considering that there are compatriots who live between their countries of residence and Korea, it is desirable to treat overseas Koreans who have stayed for a certain period of time in the same manner as Korean nationals, he explained.

Choi emphasized that eliminating discrimination against compatriots and restoring the community are urgent issues. The policy so far has been to continuously implement discriminatory policies based on country of origin, which has resulted in a failure to properly embrace 3 million compatriots in communist-sphere countries, such as China and Russia. The enactment of the Overseas Koreans Act itself is a discriminatory policy that differentially treats compatriots. It is necessary to approach compatriots residing in Korea from the perspective of supply and demand for labor and protection of jobs for Korean nationals.

He argued that it is the responsibility of the state to provide relief and restoration for the damages caused by the racial discrimination and human rights violations committed by Japanese colonial rule and to restore the status of overseas compatriots who had to suffer the pain of colonial rule, division, the Korean War and the Cold War with the rest of the Korean Peninsula, and that the return and freedom of movement of compatriots who were cut off from their home country and could not be accepted within the community should be guaranteed. 

Running fast to realize national task of ‘building global Korean community’

Dedication to role as ‘protective barrier and spokesperson for 7 million overseas Koreans’

“

2024 was a year of rapid progress, marking the first anniversary of the launch of the Overseas Koreans Agency. Launched by the Yoon Suk Yeol administration according to the long-cherished wishes of overseas Koreans, the OKA has devoted its heart and soul to implementing the national tasks of “building a global Korean community” and “establishing a global backbone nation.” As the “protective barrier and representative of the 7 million overseas Koreans” that the OKA has been professing to be, there have been many cases of removing thorns from under the fingernails of overseas Koreans, who are precious assets of the Republic of Korea, providing practical assistance, and taking care of the people’s livelihoods and realities on the ground.

In particular, since the inauguration of the second OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk on July 31, the speed of the OKA’s business progress has been accelerated and pushed forward. The Overseas Koreans Policy Academic Forum, held for the first time since the OKA’s launch, was a venue for active discussions on new policy paradigms, with the government, academia and civic groups

coming together. Until now, citizens living overseas have had to travel long distances to overseas diplomatic missions to obtain joint and financial certificates in order to use domestic online services, which was inconvenient. However, a pilot service was launched Nov. 28 to enable overseas citizens to use various domestic online services, such as e-government services, electronic financial services, non-face-to-face medical services, online education services and online shopping, by enabling non-face-to-face identity verification without using a domestic phone or visiting an overseas diplomatic mission in person.

In addition to the 22nd World Korean Business Convention, which achieved the greatest success ever, the 25th World Korean Association Conference, the 18th World Korean Day commemoration ceremony and the 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum were also successfully held.

In the 2024 year-end issue of Window Into Overseas Koreans, we have chosen and will introduce the top 10 news stories from the OKA this year. <Editor’s Note>

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1. 22nd World Korean Business Convention; largest number of export contracts ever signed



The 22nd World Korean Business Convention, held at Jeonbuk National University from Oct. 22-24 under the slogan, “Together with overseas Koreans, to the center of global business,” concluded with the largest-ever achievement, including export consultations worth US\$630 million. Hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency (Director Lee Sang-duk) and the Jeonbuk Special Self-Governing Province (Gov. Kim Kwan-young), this convention, which was held for the first time in Jeonju, was attended by 3,500 overseas Korean businesspeople and domestic businesspeople from around the world, and 14,000 people visited the convention’s corporate exhibition hall over the three days. The convention saw a record number of 20,000 export consultation cases, worth \$630 million. In particular, unlike past conventions, this one drew a positive response from participants with new initiatives, such as incorporating Jeonbuk’s traditional culture into the program.

2. Completion of 25th World Korean Association Conference and 18th World Korean Day commemoration ceremony

The 25th World Korean Association Conference was held successfully from Oct. 1 to 3 at Lotte Hotel World in Jamsil, Seoul. The opening ceremony was attended by approximately 420 people, including 350 Korean association presidents from 50 countries, executives of the World Assembly of Korean Association and key figures from Korea, including Han Dong-hoon, leader of the People Power Party. Under the slogan of “Proud Korean Compatriots, Korea Moving Together,” the participants listened to expert lectures and forums in a new program titled “My Homeland, My Korea” and a special lecture on the “August 15 Unification Doctrine” presented by Minister of Unification Kim Young-ho in “Dialogue with the Government” on Oct. 2. Before adopting a seven-article resolution, the Korean association presidents divided into 10 regions and held discussions on current issues by region. On Oct. 4, the 18th World Korean Day ceremony was held at the same location, with the attendance of Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, and 350 other key figures from Korea and heads of Korean associations around the world.



3. Lee Sang-duk takes office as OKA's second commissioner



Lee Sang-duk took office as the second commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency on July 31. In his inaugural speech, he presented a vision to create an environment in which the Republic of Korea and the overseas Korean community can develop together and contribute to the common prosperity of humanity and the promotion of world peace. To this end, he stated he would always be open and communicate based on empathy with overseas Koreans and the public in Korea. Lee also emphasized, “As the head of the OKA, which the Yoon Suk Yeol government launched in June of last year to fulfill the long-held wish of overseas Koreans, I will devote myself to realizing the national task of ‘building a global Korean community.’ I will strive to expand the overall capabilities of the Korean people by reflecting well the fact that the compatriot community has grown into a valuable overseas resource that can provide mutual assistance with the Republic of Korea.” Since the commissioner took office, the OKA’s projects have been carried out at a faster pace and with greater momentum.

4. OKA holds 1st Anniversary Dialogue with compatriots

The Overseas Koreans Agency held an online and offline “Dialogue with overseas compatriots” event in the main auditorium on the fourth floor of the OKA headquarters in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, to mark its first anniversary on June 5. At the event, Commissioner Lee held a Q&A (Overseas Koreans ask questions, OKA Commissioner answers) session and introduced the agency’s achievements so far, such as establishing a legal and institutional foundation for promoting overseas Korean policies, fostering the identity of overseas Koreans and improving domestic awareness, and supporting vulnerable compatriots. In particular, Jeong Tae-sik (91), the oldest Sakhalin compatriot to permanently resettle in Ansan, Gyeonggi Province, in May, drew attention by participating in the event via video with his family. Jeong sang “Sakhalin Arirang,” a song he composed himself. Overseas Koreans, including Kwon Gyeong-seok, president of the National Association of Sakhalin Returnees, and Jeong Yeong-soon, president of the Association of Koryo Saram, shared stories of difficulties they experienced in their daily lives and made various suggestions to the OKA.



5. 2024 Overseas Korean Policy Academic Forum success



The Overseas Koreans Agency held the Overseas Korean Policy Academic Forum for the first time at the Luna Miele Convention Hall in Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, to collect opinions from various sectors in order to establish comprehensive and systematic policies related to domestic compatriots. Under the theme of “Dialogue with the Government, Academia, and Civic Groups,” 26 speakers and panelists made presentations and held discussions across three sessions. Members of the general public also participated. In addition, all sessions were livestreamed online through the OKA’s YouTube account. In the first session, presentations were given on the theme of “Measures to improve laws and systems for domestic compatriots,” in the second session, on the theme of “Measures to expand domestic awareness of compatriots living in Korea” and in the third session, on the theme of “Policy dialogue for settling domestic compatriots.” Afterward, a free discussion was held on topics that included “Lowering the age for allowing dual citizenship.”

6. 2,000 compatriots visit their home country for training, largest number ever

The 2024 Next Generation Compatriots Home Country Invitational Training hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency opened July 15 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Incheon to provide the next generation of compatriots with an opportunity to experience Korean history and culture and to enhance their identity and pride in their home country by understanding Korea’s development story. This training was conducted over eight sessions, each lasting six nights and seven days. Approximately 1,800 youth and college students from 75 countries participated in the six summer sessions (July-August). In addition, 200 college students and youth participated in the two winter sessions, each with 100 students. In accordance with the First Basic Plan for Overseas Koreans, the OKA designated 2024 as the first year to expand the “Next Generation Compatriots Home Country Invitational Training,” starting with 2,000 people this year and expanding to 6,000 people by 2028.



7. 232 Hangeul school teachers from 46 countries receive training in their home country



The Overseas Koreans Agency held the opening ceremony of the 2024 Hangeul School Teacher Invitational Training at Songdo Convensia in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, on July 22 and held capacity building training until July 27. The training, which was held for six days, was attended by 232 Hangeul school teachers and principals from 46 countries around the world. These Hangeul school teachers, who are leading the way in identity education for the next generation of Koreans around the world, visited their home country to learn Korean language teaching methods and experience and understand Korea’s development. Through online pre-training for three weeks, starting July 1, they intensively learned the Korean language and Korean culture and history teaching methods, and during the training, they learned advanced teaching methods, such as practical exercises. They also participated in a program to directly experience and understand Korea’s development story so that they can teach the next generation of compatriots with pride in Korea.

8. 261 Sakhalin compatriots receive permanent return and settlement support



Sixty Sakhalin compatriots set foot in the homeland of their dreams on May 11. The Sakhalin compatriots entered the East Sea Port via sea from Vladivostok, due to flights being cut off due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. They are first- and second-generation compatriots who immigrated to Sakhalin or were born there before Aug. 15, 1945, as well as their accompanying families. The Overseas Koreans Agency selected 261 people as beneficiaries of the 2023 Permanent Return and Settlement Support. Excluding the 16 who entered in April, the remaining 185 people entered the country individually in sequence. The Sakhalin compatriots settled in rental housing in Seoul, Gyeonggi, Incheon, Eumseong and Busan, which were sponsored by the government for the first generation to return permanently. Since the Sakhalin Koreans' permanent repatriation project began in 1992, 5,860 people have returned to their homeland, and there are currently approximately 30,000 Koreans living in Sakhalin.

9. 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards selection and announcement

The 2024 Overseas Koreans Literary Awards grand prize winners were Jang Hye-young (United Arab Emirates) for “Mosi” in the Poetry category, Jo Seong-guk (USA) for “I Will Be in Paradise” in the Short Story category and Lee Myeong-ran (New Zealand) for “Linda, the Woman Next Door” in the Essay/Memoir category. Along with the grand prize winners in each category, 13 winners of the 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards were selected and announced. The winners will receive a total of 30 million won in prize money and a trophy, and the winning works will be published and distributed in the anthology “Window Into Overseas Korean Literature.” The awards ceremony was held online on Dec. 11. The judges included leading Korean literary figures, including Moon Tae-joon and Jeong Ho-seung (both in the Poetry category), Koo Hyo-seo and Eun Hee-kyung (both in the Short Story category), and Park Sang-woo and Lee Kyung-ja (both in the Essay/Memoir category). The Overseas Koreans Literary Awards, now in their 26th year, are evaluated as having a great influence as a bridge connecting 7 million overseas Koreans and the people of the Republic of Korea.



10. 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum held



The 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum, which brought together former and current Korean politicians from around the world, opened Aug. 20 at the Fairmont Ambassador Seoul in Yeouido, Seoul. This event, held under the slogan, “Our Network is Our Net Asset,” was the largest ever. A total of 96 people from 14 countries participated. Around 50 political figures, including National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik, Minister of Foreign Affairs Cho Tae-yeol, Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, People Power Party National Assembly Member Na Kyung-won and President of the Parliamentarian’s Society of the Republic of Korea Jeong Dae-cheol, also attended. For this year’s event, the percentage of participants under the age of 45 exceeded 50 percent, unlike previous years, including Daniel Bae, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Oklahoma (age 29, third term); Ernest Kim, a member of the Youth Council of the Uzbek Liberal Democratic Party (age 27); and Yannick Shetty, the youngest member of the New Austrian Party (NEOS) in Austria’s House of Representatives (age 29). [장]

Wearing clothes decorated with Hangeul, a Korean to the core; 'Hangeul is like the rice we eat every day'

First office building established, commemorative event on Dec. 14; goals are to establish AP Korean and expand Korean language classes



Monica Ryu, president of the Foundation For Korean Language and Culture, pictured here, is Hangeul to the core, to the point that she wears a suit with Korean letters for official events.

A former doctor who has worked in the medical field all her life is gaining attention for leading the movement to promote Hangeul in the United States. The main character is Monica Ryu (77, Korean name: Jeon Wol-hwa), the president of the Foundation For Korean Language and Culture in USA. Just looking at the name of the foundation, it is easy to mistake it for a public institution. It is a nonprofit, purely civilian organization headquartered in Los Angeles that has been promoting Hangeul around the world for 30 years. We had a written exchange with Ryu, who has been serving as a director of the foundation since 2011 and is in her eighth year of service as the president.

Congratulations on the 30th anniversary of the foundation. Please introduce the Foundation For Korean Language and Culture.

"The Foundation For Korean Language and Culture is a nonprofit organization established under state of California law in LA, USA, that works to open and expand Korean language classes in regular elementary, middle and high schools in the United States. There are many foreign languages taught in elementary, middle and high schools in the United States, such as Spanish, French, Japanese, Chinese, Russian and Latin. Korean is one of them."

What are the foundation's goals and future plans?

"The ultimate goal is to establish AP Korean. It is an educational system called Advanced Placement (AP). The system provides high school students with an opportunity to study college subjects in advance. If they complete this course and get good grades, the course will be recognized as credits after entering college, so they can fill that time with other subjects and even graduate early. It has been 15 years since Chinese and Japanese were recognized as AP courses, and we are in our third year of petitioning for Korean. Currently, 28,547 people have participated in the petition. Following the opening of AP Korean, another goal is to increase the number of Korean classes in elementary, middle and high schools. Currently, 217 regular schools have Korean classes. This number needs to be doubled."

Proceeds from the sale of self-compiled Korean language textbooks were used to secure a building

You recently secured a building for the first time since the foundation was created. How do you plan to utilize it?

"The foundation operates in nine areas. Teacher training, prospective teacher

training, administrator training, student training, etc. Large-scale teacher training with many teachers will be held in the large auditorium of the LA Education Center, where the foundation is located, and training for small groups will be held in this foundation headquarters building. In addition, there is a project that the foundation has proudly prepared. It is to teach Korean for free to low-income and non-Korean children in the surrounding area. Many of them want to learn Korean, but they cannot go to weekend school because they are not of Korean descent, and there are many cases where the schools they attend do not have Korean classes.”

I understand that the foundation did this without any outside help.

“We compiled a Korean language textbook that differentiates it from textbooks for Korean as a native language. We were able to purchase a building with the income from textbook sales. Foreign language textbooks in the United States must follow the proficiency guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the California Department of Education. The guidelines are the 5C’s (Communication, Culture, Connection, Comparison, Communities). The high-quality textbook ‘Epic Korean,’ created according to these guidelines, has been adopted and is causing a sensation in many places. It has been adopted and used in the western, eastern, central, northern and southern United States, as well as in Canada, schools affiliated with the Osan U.S. military base in Korea and in Ireland.”

I am curious about the reason or background for starting the Hangeul promotion movement.

“Hangeul is like the rice to me that I eat every day. As a doctor, I work with people who are having a hard time, but I was far from an organized social service. I realized that systematic public service is important. Someone has to plan, inform and collect. The place I arrived at along the chain of service and volunteering was the Foundation For Korean Language and Culture. Through the foundation, I was able to reaffirm my Korean identity, and I have accompanied its journey to promote the excellence of Hangeul and Korean as a second foreign language essential for the globalization of the next generation.”

In recognition of her efforts to spread the Korean language, she was selected as a Proud Gyeonggi Person last October.

“The spread of the Korean language was possible thanks to the tireless dedication of the previous directors who started it 30 years ago. I joined the cause late. Rather than receiving the Proud Gyeonggi Person award as a prize given to me, I took it as support for all diaspora Gyeonggi women and women who have worked



The photo shows the first building built by the Foundation For Korean Language and Culture without external assistance to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the foundation's establishment.

hard outside of Gyeonggi too.”

What are some of the difficulties you face as an overseas Korean?

“I first came to the U.S. half a century ago. At that time, I was unfamiliar with the culture, the language was awkward, and the U.S. was a bit closed off. But I don't remember anything that was particularly heartbreaking. Rather, as a foreigner, I was able to do more things by understanding the culture and history of both countries, and I was able to live as a global citizen. I think life is all about how you approach it.”

If you have any wishes for the Overseas Koreans Agency or your home country, please tell us.

“Korea needs to break away from male chauvinism, and to do that, mothers need to blossom, and this must be put into practice. Only then can the next generation's education run smoothly. I think that only by boldly breaking the repetitive chain of connections can mothers' sons and fathers' daughters be able to open their hearts and live well. The other side of an inferiority complex can be seen as superiority. If someone feels superior to something, you can see that there is an inferiority complex hidden behind it. I hope that the OKA and my home country can serve as a foundation for escaping from this authoritarian environment and becoming productive global citizens, doing what you want and living happily.”

Ryu is a writer who debuted through the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards hosted by the Overseas Korean Foundation, the predecessor of the OKA. She is a member of the American Catholic Writers Association and the American Essayists Association, and in 2007, she participated as a regular contributor to the JoongAng Ilbo health column. 장

Korean descendants in Cuba: ‘Thank you to OKA for inviting us to our homeland’

Descendants of independence activists set foot on their homeland to mark establishment of diplomatic relations between Korea and Cuba



The descendants of Koreans living in Cuba who visited their homeland at the invitation of the OKA pose for a photo, saying, “Thank you to the Korean government,” on Dec. 9. From left to right are Teresa Huerta Guin, a prosecutor at the Special Prosecutor’s Office in Varadero, Cuba; Nora Im Alonso, the granddaughter of independence activist Gov. Lim Cheon-taek; and Maioli Correa Sanchez, a student at the Cuban Hangeul School.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) held an event inviting three descendants of Koreans from Cuba from Dec. 9-13 to celebrate the establishment of diplomatic relations between Korea and Cuba in February.

The attendees were Nora Lim Alonso (59), the granddaughter of independence activist Gov. Lim Cheon-taek; Teresa Huerta Guin (59), a public prosecutor at the Varadero Special Prosecutor’s Office; and Maioli Sanchez (56), a student at the Cuban Hangeul School.

Gov. Lim founded the Cuban branch of the Korean Patriotic Corps after immigrating to Cuba in 1905, served as the president of the Cuban branch of the Korean National Association, raised money for the provisional government’s independence fund to support the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai and also served as the first president of the Cuban Korean Association. He was

posthumously awarded the Order of Merit for National Foundation in 1997 and was selected as the Independence Activist of October 2024 by the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs.

After arriving in Korea on Dec. 9, the visitors went to Daejeon National Cemetery, then visited the Independence Hall of Korea to look back on the footsteps of their ancestors. They also received health checkups with the cooperation of the Korean Red Cross, toured Gyeongbok Palace and the National Museum of Contemporary Korean History, and took part in various Korean cultural experiences.

“We expect that Korean descendants will not only serve as a bridge between the two countries but also become valuable diplomatic assets in strengthening the relationship between the two countries,” OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said.

Window Into Overseas Koreans conducted an interview with the visiting Korean descendants at a cafe in Gwanghwamun, Seoul, on Dec. 9. They said in unison, “We are deeply grateful to the OKA for inviting us to our homeland.”

The following is a Q&A with the three Korean descendants from Cuba.

Please tell us about your impressions of visiting your homeland.

Nora Lim Alonso: “The moment I set foot on the land of my homeland, where my grandfather and father, who are from Incheon, had longed to visit so much while they were alive, I was overwhelmed with joy and mixed emotions. Unlike the image of Korea I had heard from my grandfather, when I actually came here, from the moment I set foot in Incheon Airport, I was surprised by the dazzling development of Seoul.”

After immigrating to Cuba in 1905, independence activist Lim Cheon-taek founded the Cuban branch of the Korean Patriotic Corps, served as the president of the Cuban branch of the Korean National Association, raised funds for independence and delivered them to the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai, and served as the first president of the Cuban Korean Association. He was posthumously awarded the Order of Merit for National Foundation in 1997 and was selected as the Independence Activist of October 2024 by the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs.

Nora graduated from the Calixto Garcia School of Medical Sciences and is currently working as an internal medicine specialist at a general hospital in Havana, the capital of Cuba.

Teresa Huerta Guin: “My grandfather and father had a dream of one day setting foot back in their homeland, but they were unable to achieve that dream, so I ended up achieving it instead. My grandfather’s hometown is Seoul, and I am grateful that I can spend a lot of time in Seoul. I would like to thank the OKA for helping me achieve my dream and the Korean people for welcoming me warmly. I will share the many things I have seen and felt when I return to Cuba.”

Teresa Huerta Guin graduated from the Department of Law at the University of Havana and has been working as a prosecutor at the Special Prosecutor’s Office in Varadero, Matanzas, for 34 years.

Maioli Correa Sanchez: “This is my second visit to my home country, following a summer visit last July, but now it is winter. Every time I visit, many people at Incheon Airport welcome me warmly, so I



Nora Im Alonso, the granddaughter of independence activist and Gov. Lim Cheon-taek



Teresa Huerta Guin, a public prosecutor at the Varadero Special Prosecutor’s Office



Maioli Correa Sanchez, a student at the Cuban Hangeul School

am very grateful. I feel that I am not alone in my home country but am with my late grandfather, father and mother, who dreamed of visiting my home country even in their dreams.”

(At this point she continued her answer with a tearful voice.)

“When I first visited, my goal was to find my grandfather’s name, and I want to try again this time. He first moved to Mexico and then to Cuba, but when he was living in Mexico, there was a fire and everything burned down, so all the records about him were lost. I think his name was Kim Jae-seong, and he was from Incheon, but I don’t know for sure.”

Maioli Correa Sanchez is learning Korean at a Hangeul school in Havana. She spoke Korean occasionally during the interview.

Do you have any memories of your grandfather or stories related to your homeland that you heard from your grandfather?

Nora Lim Alonso: “I only knew it as my grandfather’s country, but in truth, I didn’t really know much about it. I only had the image of a difficult life that I heard from my grandfather, but when I came here, I was surprised to see how much it had developed. My mother is from Spain, so my grandmother taught her how to make kimchi and many other Korean dishes, so I grew up eating Korean food since I was little.

“In particular, my grandfather not only established and operated a Korean language school in Cuba but also diligently learned Spanish to adapt well to Cuban society, which was a Spanish colony, and taught it to Koreans who immigrated with him. He

also showed great passion for educating his children so that they would not forget their roots as Koreans. That is why my uncle, Jeronimo Lim (Korean name: Lim Eun-jo), served as the vice minister of industry and food in the Cuban government and the president of the Korean Association, and my surviving aunt, Marta Lim (86), published a book called ‘Koreans in Cuba’ in Spanish and Korean.”

Eng Lim Penjan Antonio (28), the great-grandson of Gov. Lim Cheon-taek who is currently pursuing a master’s degree in artificial intelligence at Chungnam National University Graduate School, was awarded citizenship of the Republic of Korea by the government last August through a ceremony to award citizenship to descendants of independence activists.

Teresa Huerta Guin: “I only knew Seoul, where my grandfather

lived. When he was alive, he always thought about how to maintain Korean culture and pass it on to his descendants. That's how I was able to even know that my roots are in Korea. I will see, learn and feel many things in my home country during my visit."

Maioli Correa Sanchez: "I am a fourth-generation immigrant. My great-grandfather passed away before I was born, so I was able to hear stories about Korea from my father and aunt. The family gathering culture of having a meal together once a week on the weekends since my great-grandfather's time still remains."

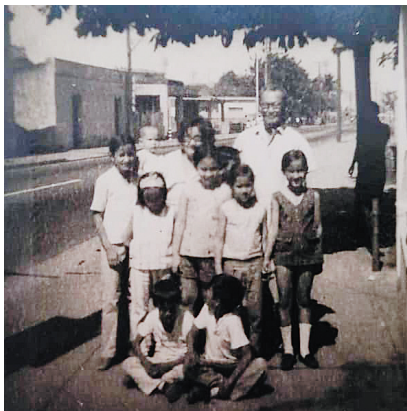
"As civilian diplomats, we will work to serve as a bridge between Korea and Cuba and to pass on Korean culture to the next generation."

Do you have any plans to engage in activities related to Korea in the future, taking advantage of your visit to your home country?

Nora Lim Alonso: "The Korean Association was maintained while my grandfather and uncle were alive, but it has now fallen into disrepair. Due to political circumstances, such as forced migration, the Korean community has virtually disappeared compared to what it used to be. However, as Korea and Cuba have established diplomatic relations and exchanges are expanding, I plan to use my visit to my home country as an opportunity to serve as a civilian diplomat and will work to serve as a bridge between Korea and Cuba and to pass on Korean culture to the next generation."

Teresa Huerta Guin: "There is a large organization called the Jose Marti Cultural Association, named after the poet and national hero of Cuba, Jose Marti. There are various small-scale clubs and interest groups under it, and one of them is the Korean Descendants Group. There, we hold networking cultural gatherings where we share Korean food and build friendships. Our goal is to develop it into an official association that is recognized by the government."

Maioli Correa Sanchez: "Most Koreans in Cuba are people who immigrated from Mexico. Since 2014, there has been a permanent exhibition of materials related to immigration from Mexico to Cuba.



A commemorative photo taken of independence activist couple Gov. Im Cheon-taek (1st on R, back row) and his wife with their grandchildren in the early 1970s. Nora Im Alonso is located in the second row, the second person on the right. (Courtesy of Nora Im Alonso)



Korean descendants wear hanbok at a meeting in Cuba during Chuseok last year. The second from the right is Maioli Correa Sanchez. (Courtesy of Maioli Correa Sanchez)

That's the most impressive thing. There are quarterly exhibitions of 'hanbok,' traditional culture and traditional musical instruments. They also offer Korean language classes and Korean cooking classes. Not only do Korean descendants come here, but Cubans who are interested in Korean culture also visit. They even filmed Korean movies and dramas."

How big is the Korean Wave in Cuba?

Nora Lim Alonso: "They say that among young people, if you don't know about the Korean Wave, you can't even join in on a conversation. That's how big 'hallyu' is in Cuba."

Maioli Correa Sanchez: "Even before Korea and Cuba established diplomatic ties, Korean youths came to Cuba through the Overseas Koreans Foundation to sing and perform traditional dances. We even had an event in Cuba for Liberation Day on Aug. 15."

If you have something to say to your home country and Koreans, please do so.

Nora Lim Alonso: "I would like to thank the Korean government and Korean people for providing me with this opportunity and for welcoming me warmly. Through this opportunity, I was able to feel my identity as a descendant of Koreans. And I hope you remember that there are 1,099 descendants of Koreans in the small country of Cuba. I hope there will be more opportunities to invite descendants of Koreans in the future."

Teresa Huerta Guin: "I live in Matanzas, the province where most Korean immigrants live. I hope that there will be more exchanges between Korea and Cuba so that Korean culture can be shared more."

On Dec. 11, Korean descendants visited the Daejeon National Cemetery, where Gov. Lim Cheon-taek is buried, to pay their respects. Nora Lim Alonso said, "What I looked forward to the most during this visit to my home country was visiting my grandfather's grave," and expressed her gratitude to her grandfather, saying, "I am proud of my grandfather, and thanks to his efforts, I have been able to enjoy many things since coming to Korea." 🇰🇷

Overseas Korean Literary Awards ceremony 'Writing in Korean abroad has great meaning'

Awards presented to 13 winners online and offline; novelist Koo Hyo-seo delivers lecture

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) held the 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards ceremony at the Overseas Koreans Welcome Center in Songdo, Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, on Dec. 11. At the awards ceremony held online and offline, 13 people were honored with awards, including the grand prize winners in three categories: Poetry, Short Stories and Essays/Memoirs. The winners live abroad, and therefore most of them attended online. Cho Seong-guk (USA), who received the grand prize in the Short Stories category, said through a video call, "I find it very meaningful that I wrote in Korean overseas," and expressed his thoughts on continuing to be interested in the things around him and enjoying his creative activities.

Author Lee Myeong-ran (New Zealand), who received the grand prize in the Essay/Memoir category, said in her acceptance speech: "I wanted to tell the story that we cannot live alone. I wanted to convey the message that we must live together, even if we are foreigners with different skin colors and cultures."

Author Jang Hye-young (United Arab Emirates), who received the grand prize in the Poetry category, said, "I am grateful that we were able to communicate through literature as a link."

Author Lee Ji-young (Jordan), who is working in the travel industry in Jordan and received the excellence award in the Essay/Memoir category, attended the awards ceremony in person and said, "I was happy and encouraged by the news of the award because I heard it when I was having a hard time because my travels had been interrupted due to the war in Israel."

After the awards ceremony, Koo Hyo-seo, a representative novelist of modern Korean literature who served as a judge, was invited to give a lecture. Koo encouraged the winners, saying, "As the years go by, the level of the award-winning works has improved so much that they could easily win even if they were submitted to the New Year's Literary Contest."

Koo made remarks on the attitude of those who write, saying: "People who write should cultivate and nurture others well. They should not be obsessed with their own thoughts, nor should they force their thoughts on others. We have learned since childhood that




OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (L) presents a plaque and prize money to Lee Ji-young (Jordan), who won the excellence award in the Essay/Memoir category, at the 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards ceremony on Dec. 11.

the school bell rings 'ding ding ding.'

"However, the actual bell does not ring ding ding ding, but we hear it that way. That is the power of language." He emphasized that writers should not be restricted by language. "Humans are thrown into the sea of language. Writers should be able to escape that sea."

OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk emphasized: "The Overseas Koreans Literary Awards have served as a bridge that connects the lives of all overseas Koreans who are separated from each other, and thanks to the hard work of overseas Korean writers, the horizons of Korean literature have expanded and the status of our culture has also been elevated. I will actively support and encourage the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards so that they can become a gateway for writers."

Meanwhile, the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards have been held annually since 1999 to support the creative activities of Korean literature by 7 million overseas Koreans around the world, and to discover and introduce excellent literary works that contain the identity of the Korean people. These awards are evaluated to have contributed to expanding the horizons of Korean literature through the challenges and passion of numerous overseas Korean writers, and many of the winners are active in their respective domestic literary spheres. 

OKA policy advisory committee says, 'We need to bring together compatriot affairs that are scattered throughout government'

'Control tower role needed'; 'Overseas Korean of the Month' selection and announcement also discussed

The Overseas Koreans Agency held the 3rd Overseas Koreans Agency Policy Advisory Committee Meeting in the main conference room of the OKA's office in Songdo, Incheon, on Dec. 2.

"When the OKA was launched, we did not make enough progress in unifying the work of overseas Koreans scattered across each ministry," OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said in his opening remarks. "In order to fulfill our functions and roles as the responsible agency for overseas Koreans policies, we must centralize the tasks of overseas Koreans around the OKA, even if it takes time."

The advisory committee members expressed their active sympathy for the unification of policies for compatriots and expressed their opinion that "Inter-departmental work coordination and resource allocation should be carried out so that the purpose of the OKA being launched in June of last year can be maintained and



The 3rd Overseas Koreans Agency Policy Advisory Committee Meeting is held in the OKA main conference room in Songdo, Incheon, on Dec. 2.

its practical functions can be strengthened."

To this end, they recommended ▲ Presentation of a vision for policies for compatriots, ▲ Reorganization of laws and systems that are out of date with the situation on the ground, such as the Overseas Koreans Education Act, ▲ Dispatch of consuls in charge of compatriot affairs to overseas diplomatic missions and ▲ Active negotiations with relevant

ministries and securing of a leadership role.

Meanwhile, the advisory committee also discussed the plan for selecting the "Overseas Korean of the Month" that the OKA will spearhead next year. The OKA plans to find compatriots who have contributed to the development of the Republic of Korea and the improvement of the status of Koreans in their countries of residence, and to widely publicize them in Korea and the overseas Korean community.

OKA to provide support for online degree courses to improve professionalism of Hangeul school teachers

Applications open until early Jan.; results announced at end of Feb.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) announced Dec. 6 that it will help Hangeul school teachers take Korean language education degree courses at domestic cyber universities in order to improve their professionalism. The project to support Hangeul school teacher degree courses will help teachers obtain degrees and a Certificate of Korean Language Teacher (Level 2) by covering a portion of the tuition fees. Kyunghee Cyber University, Cyber University of Korea, Digital Seoul Culture Arts University, Cyber Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Sejong Cyber University, Soongsil Cyber University and Wonkwang Digital University operate degree courses aimed at third-year transfer students.

Since the deadlines are different for each university, it will be necessary to check the recruitment guidelines. The OKA will select

candidates based on its own criteria from a pool of successful applicants to the universities and will announce the results at the end of February. Those selected will take online classes in the Korean language, general linguistics and Korean language education theory, among other subjects, and receive a degree. If they meet the conditions, such as taking required subjects, they can obtain a Certificate of Korean Language Teacher (Level 2).

"Cultivating the identities of the next generation of compatriots is one of the core goals of the overseas compatriots policy, and Hangeul schools and Hangeul school teachers play an important role, so we will continue to support capacity building," Commissioner Lee said.

For more information, visit the Overseas Koreans Agency (oka.go.kr) and Study Korean (study.korean.net) websites.

OKA to launch Global Next Generation Compatriots Committee next year to foster next generation

Preparatory meeting held Dec. 9; 12 overseas compatriots from 4 divisions in attendance, including next generation, adoptees

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) has decided to launch the Global Next Generation Compatriots Committee in the first half of 2025 to support the discovery and development of next-generation talents and their advancement into mainstream society.

The OKA held a preparatory meeting at the Overseas Koreans Welcome Center in Songdo, Incheon, on Dec. 9 to launch the committee. At the meeting, 12 overseas compatriots from four divisions, including ▲ Next generation, ▲ Adopted compatriots, ▲ Alumni from recipients of Korean scholarships and ▲ Overseas missions in Incheon, attended and expressed various opinions for building a next-generation network.



OKA Deputy Commissioner Byeon Cheol-hwan (7th from L) takes a commemorative photo after holding a preparatory meeting at the Overseas Koreans Welcome Center in Songdo, Incheon, on Dec. 9.

They discussed ways to enter the mainstream society of their country of residence and shared success stories. They also discussed specific ways for the next generation to contribute to the development of the Republic of Korea. After attending the meeting, they visited historical sites in Incheon, such as the Museum of Korean Immigration History, the Chemulpo Club and the Jogyeji Stairway, in order to foster their identity. The OKA plans to utilize the

Global Next Generation Overseas Koreans Committee as an official network for building a global next generation overseas Koreans network and developing global human resources, as well as an advisory group for the next generation of overseas Koreans policies.

Overseas Koreans Business Advisory Group (OK BIZ) to support overseas expansion of K-food

OKA arranges export consultations for 42 domestic food companies with buyers from 12 countries

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) invited the Overseas Koreans Business Advisory Group (OK BIZ) to support the overseas expansion of K-food and held the 2nd World Korean Business Forum and Export Consultation Meeting at COEX in Gangnam-gu, Seoul, on Nov. 23.

This event was held in conjunction with the 2024 COEX Food Week. In particular, 20 food experts from 12 countries, including the United States, China, Japan and Germany, and 42 domestic food-related companies participated in the event and conducted export consultations. As a result, 157 cases and US\$14.45 million worth of export consultations were achieved.

This event is the second event following the 1st World Korean Business Forum (Theme: K-beauty) held in Incheon last August and was organized to support export growth and overseas market development of Korean food-related companies under the theme of K-food. In this forum, overseas Korean business advisers active in China, the U.S. and Germany, among other countries, presented



Participants take a commemorative photo at the 2nd World Korean Business Forum held at COEX in Gangnam-gu, Seoul, on Nov. 23. The export consultation meeting targeting domestic food companies resulted in export consultation results worth US\$14.45 million.

their export and import strategies. They analyzed the macroeconomic environment and local situations and presented practical and effective measures for domestic small and medium-sized enterprises to successfully enter the local market.



OKA Upcoming Events

- Opening ceremony of the Incheon Branch of the Overseas Korean Service Support Center (Dec. 2)
- Overseas Korean Policy Academic Forum (Dec. 6)
- 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards prize ceremony (Dec. 11)

OKA Commissioner's Activities in December

- Dec. 2: 3rd Overseas Koreans Agency Policy Advisory Committee Meeting
- 2: Opening ceremony of Overseas Koreans Service Support Center, Incheon Branch
- 3: 21st Eurasian Regional Conference of the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council
- 6: Overseas Korean Policy Academic Forum
- 11: Overseas Koreans Literary Awards prize ceremony
- 19: 34th Overseas Koreans Policy Working Committee and luncheon
- 20: Consolation gift delivery ceremony for Sakhalin compatriots permanently returning to Korea
- 23: Taekwondo Promotion Foundation business agreement signing

OKA Announcements

Contest for experiences of young Koreans who have interned at overseas Korean companies

Anyone who has completed the program can participate; awards and prize money available

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) is accepting applications from young Koreans who have interned at overseas Korean companies to share their experiences until Dec. 16.

The OKA has been conducting the "Domestic Youth Internship at Overseas Korean Companies" (formerly the Hansang Enterprise Youth Internship) project since 2015 to provide opportunities for young Koreans to advance overseas.

Anyone who has completed an internship can participate in the contest. Applicants should include a video diary (vlog) about the internship country, the Korean company or the Korean community there, as well as their overall experiences related to the internship program, such as their achievements through the internship (successful cases of overseas employment) and their reasons for recommending the internship.

For those who completed the internship in 2024 (18th and 19th cohorts), the essays submitted through this will be automatically accepted by Hansang.net (www.hansang.net). In addition, if you want to apply for a video or short form, you must submit them



A poster for the 2024 Domestic Youth Internship at Overseas Korean Companies - Essay/Video/Short-Form Contest

separately. Participants can fill out the application form and send essays and videos by email (okaintern@gmail.com). The contest categories are essays, videos and short-form content. The submission specifications are essays with a free format of 2,000 characters or more and three photos that support the essay content (each 1 MB or more, jpg, jpeg, png, etc.). Videos must be around 10 minutes in acceptable video file formats, such as mp4, wmv or avi (excluding simple individual oral presentation videos). Short-form content must be short and impactful videos of less than 60 seconds.

Among the submitted content, six excellent submissions will be selected through a review of suitability, communication and originality, and the OKA Commissioner's Award will be conferred, along with a certain amount of prize money. The content selected as excellent works will be actively utilized as materials for strengthening the global capabilities of domestic youth and encouraging overseas expansion through the overseas Korean network.

The results will be announced Dec. 30. For further details, please send an email to okaintern@gmail.com.



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